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Subjective Mobility after 1989*

Do People Feel a Social and Economic Improvement or Relative Deprivation?

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Abstract: The article analyses two types of subjective mobility between 1988 and 1993. It asks how people evaluate the changes in their social status and economic situation and seeks to identify the links with certain objective social characteristics (which fix the position of an individual in the stratification system.) It considers improvements, stability and decline in the social position in six countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and, primarily, the Czech Republic. It concludes that in all the countries considered, a sense of improved social position is linked with certain social characteristics (lower age group, higher level of education, profession, independent economic activity) while a sense of decline (relative deprivation) is linked with others (older age group, lower level of education, economic inactivity or relatively unqualified work, membership in the Communist Party). Social characteristics connected with a sense of advancement or deprivation are more or less the same in all countries. In certain countries, however, particularly the Czech Republic, the sense of relative deprivation is relatively lower than in others, and the sense of an improved social position is stronger. The article considers the factors which reinforce the link between a sense of advancement or of relative deprivation with given social characteristics, as well as the factors contributing to the much more widespread sense of relative deprivation in individual countries compared to the Czech Republic.

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The Post-Communist Transformation and Changing Perceptions of Objective Changes

The recent changes in the countries of central and eastern Europe have had deep-reaching political, economic and social effects and, with these, rapid changes in attitudes, values and expectations. A number of authors [e.g. Runciman 1966, Lipset 1981, Sztompka 1992, Wnuk-Lipiński 1994] have shown that all major social changes, whether transformation or revolution, initially bring a wave of euphoria, delight, hope and faith in the future – a “revolution of rising expectations” [Runciman 1966]. They also bring widely varying hopes – hopes for a higher standard of living, higher social status and income, increased power and influence, etc. None of these hopes had previously existed as the former stability had offered no hope of their fulfilment.

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In any major social change which represents the passage of a society from instability to stability, from stagnation to prosperity, from one dominant ideology to another, or from one order of legitimacy (egalitarianism) to another (meritocracy), only a few individuals will profit during the early stages of the change. For the majority, it will bring hardship and often disillusionment. Any change will make some people feel that their situation has improved while others will feel a deterioration (especially if there is an accompanying economic boom). People begin to compare their new state with that of other people and also with their own former state. As Wnuk-Lipiński [1994] said of Poland: "Many of those who were initially against the reforms succeeded later to be among winners, while the majority of those who initially supported the radical reform programme soon found themselves among the losers (particularly in economic terms). This very phenomenon produced the widely spread sense of relative deprivation among those threatened by the implementation of free market rules..."

The initial widespread support for the transformation from an economy governed by the state to one in which the free market holds sway and from an authoritarian regime to democracy was founded more on a rejection of the past than on any decision about the future. It was based on common values rather than on subjective decisions. There were many for whom it was clear that the first need was to transform the state-controlled economy with all its errors and shortcomings, and that this transformation could only be brought about through democratic procedures. There were few, however, who gave any thought to what this transformation would mean for them personally. The initial euphoria gave way to an understandable conflict between common and long-term values on the one hand and the subjective short-term interests of rationally behaving people on the other. The state-controlled economy and redistribution system of socialism helped to create a homogenised and equalised society. They were a mechanism for corrupting the lower social strata, stimulating their loyalty to the regime. The gradual reduction of redistribution during the passage to a market economy was a drawback for those who had profited most from socialist redistribution. At the same time it brought considerable improvements for those who had been at a disadvantage under the previous regime. A rapidly changing acceptance of inequality is one of the sources of the subjective perception of advancement or of relative deprivation in the post-communist countries since 1989 [Matijù and Vlachová 1995]. At first, people were influenced by common and long term values which legitimised the transformation. They were prepared to renounce the socialist quasi-meritocracy (remuneration according to the principle of equality), the disadvantages of a state-controlled economy and a totalitarian regime, in favour of meritocracy (remuneration according to achievement), democracy and the market. In many countries, however, the tolerance of new-style inequality (which was often due not to the principle of equal opportunity, but had emerged outside the law¹) has begun to decline and a sense of loss of status and income has begun to appear i.e. a sense of *relative deprivation*.

¹) In a number of countries (Poland, Hungary) the growing sensitivity to such inequality, which has arisen due to gaps in or even straight-out breaches of the law, has led to a fall in support for the original reform process, even though these processes can be seen objectively as successful (i.e. they have reduced inflation, stimulated production and growth of the GNP, raised salaries and increased the number of private companies). There is, unfortunately, a certain time lag in the transfer of macroeconomic trends into political behaviour. Thus even positive trends do not necessarily lead to support for the political process which produced them [Kluegel and Smith 1986,

Economic, social and political inequality are present in all societies. There are inequalities in all three fundamental dimensions of social stratification, i.e. class, status and power. These three forms of inequality may, but need not, be linked, and their presence and coexistence in a society are never exceptional. They become significant only when they lead to absolute or relative deprivation. In developed societies today there is a problem not of objective economic, social and political deprivation, but of subjective ones – relative deprivation, distances from the standards prevailing in a society – which can have a strong influence on people's perceptions and behaviour [Veěerník 1991].

Subjective and Objective Mobility and Objective Stratification Characteristics

The study of *subjective* stratification characteristic (status, income, etc.), mobility, socio-economic inequality and relative deprivation² has recently been recognised as equally important as the study of *objective* stratification factors of individuals, changes in social structure, and socio-economic inequality. It has been shown that subjective perceptions of position in the social hierarchy, mobility, inequality, relative deprivation, etc. do not necessarily tally with objective position, real mobility or absolute deprivation [Lazarsfeld et al. 1974].

There is considerable empirical evidence [Runciman 1966, Lazarsfeld et al. 1974, Lipset 1981] that in a democracy, a sense of relative deprivation, the perception of inequality and justice, mobility and the opportunity for upward mobility have a much greater influence on people's position and political actions than do stratification characteristics. Thus the study of how such characteristics are perceived may be more important than that of stratification itself. This applies both to stable societies and to those in the process of transformation [Lipset 1981]. "Given that behavior is often strongly conditioned by 'what is perceived' rather than 'what actually exists', the subjective domain is clearly important in understanding the social transformations in the post-communist societies, as well as the

Wnuk-Lipiński 1994] and the decline in enthusiasm is accompanied by a risk that support for the transformation, which was founded on the rejection of the former system, will soon disappear, together with support for changes in society.

²) Relative deprivation (a subjective feeling of impoverishment, being disadvantaged, downward mobility) arises from those economic, social and political inequalities which an individual feels when comparing him or herself to other individuals, to a group of individuals or to other periods in his or her life. An individual who feels relatively deprived is not necessarily so in absolute terms, while people who are at the bottom of society in economic, social and power terms do not necessarily feel more relatively deprived than those who are higher up the social, economic and power ladder.

The concept of relative deprivation was first introduced to sociology by Stouffer [1966] and has been used by Merton [1968], Runciman [1966] and Boudon [1986] among others. The original structural concept of relative deprivation is linked with primary group theory. This structural theory is important in studying how social structure is conceived in stable societies, while the dynamic theory [Runciman 1966, Lipset 1981] is of greater relevance in interpreting many phenomena present in societies during the transition from one order of legitimacy to another [e.g. Sztompka 1992, Wnuk-Lipiński 1994]. The latter theory studies changes in relative deprivation over time, from a historical perspective. The study of such changes is of even greater importance in studies of the perception and acceptance of macro-social changes. It is based on investigations of subjective evaluations of a situation at several points in time – before and after a change – and can reveal positive or negative trends.

more stable capitalist democracies of the West” [Alwin, Gornev and Khakhulina 1995]. Thus, reality becomes part of behaviour through its subjective interpretation, its meaning. Views of society and of social constructs give rise to feelings of relative social, economic and political deprivation and thus to reflections on the social justice of existing inequalities, and how natural, right and valid they are for a given society or individual. Such reflections then affect an individual’s political stance and behaviour – “*people think politically how they feel socially*” [Lazarfeld et al. 1974].

Subjective Mobility and Political Behaviour

That certain groups in a society feel that their level in society has declined, i.e. relative deprivation, does not necessarily mean that they will be opposed to the society in which they live. They may well, however, attempt to ameliorate this situation and improve their position through the political process. In this case, they are likely to turn to the political party which seems most able to help them in this attempt.

On the other hand, arousing and manipulating this sense of deprivation may be very effective political propaganda and is a possible strategy in the political battle. The sense of relative deprivation and the perception of its fairness or unfairness is an important subject of discussion in stable democratic societies. Politicians in such societies who are able to focus on one form of inequality to the exclusion of another find themselves with a very reliable and effective weapon. The relatively deprived groups of the population can represent a significant group of voters, of particular importance in the period leading up to an election. In societies in the throes of transition which are suffering economic problems, relative deprivation can become a very effective and even dangerous political weapon which can disrupt or even halt development. If it becomes a player in the political arena, it may prove catastrophic in a society which is still in the process of building “capitalism by democratic design” [Offe 1991].

Scholars interested in voting behaviour are eager to show the range of needs which are central to this. These include the need for a certain *income*, and that for social recognition, for a certain *status*. If a democratic society offers some possibilities for improving status and income, people will try to improve their position a) through their own efforts, social mobility, or b) by improving the status of the entire group through collective action.

Lipset [1981] showed that societies where the predominant ideology is one of individualism and meritocracy (USA) tend to favour strategies whereby individuals improve their status through their own efforts. In European countries, on the other hand, where individualism is blended with collectivism and an ideology of equality with equitable distribution of income and status, strategies aimed at improving the position of a group through collective action (elections, trade unions, etc.) are more the rule. The post-communist countries fit into this view of the stratification system and this pattern of a mixed ideology [Matijù and Vlachová 1995].

Orientation towards the political left wing is often seen as an expression of dissatisfaction and of needs unsatisfied in a given socio-economic system, while a right-wing position is seen as an expression of satisfaction and a desire to preserve the status quo. This is valid to some extent but must not be taken as gospel. Every swing of the political pendulum is an expression of dissatisfaction and of a desire for political change. It is true that in recent elections the uncontrolled effects of the transformation on society, in the

form of relative deprivation and unfulfilled expectations, have contributed to the success of groups on the left of the political continuum. The fact that in a number of countries the percentage of the population on the threshold of absolute deprivation had stayed the same as before 1989 or even increased was an additional factor in the voters' swing towards the left. The dissatisfied groups of the population thus represented potential votes for left-wing parties promising a system of greater equality. The right-wing governments underestimated the importance of increasing the legitimacy of the new system and of convincing the voters that it was correct. At the same time, democracy was beginning to work, with the risk that it could work against the very reasons for its introduction – against economic reform and even against itself.

The Approach to Analysis

A number of sociological studies published between 1990 and 1995 [e.g. Matijù and Øeháková 1992, Matijù and Øeháková 1993, Matijù 1993a] have shown that it is possible to identify groups in those countries in the process of transformation for whom the fall of the state-controlled economy and of the quasi-meritocratic principle of distribution represented a decline (people with only primary education, manual labourers, pensioners). Others (those with higher education, professionals, businessmen, young people) could be said to have gained. The study of subjective mobility has borne out the conclusions of these analyses as to which groups have experienced an improvement or a deterioration in their social position, regardless of their objective situation.

This study took a more detailed look at two types of *subjective* mobility – *social* and *economic* mobility – in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia, all countries in the process of transition. We were particularly interested in the *objective* social characteristics which allow us to identify those groups which feel that their income and social status have improved, remained stable (or stagnated) or fallen. The study also considered the role that individual characteristics of position in the stratification system play in the perception and evaluation of individual social status. The data used came from the international comparative study *Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989* (SSVE).

We began by formulating certain hypotheses for use in analyzing this data.

1. Socialistic distribution favoured certain groups in society (e.g. people with a lower level of education, manual workers) while others (those with higher education, highly qualified professionals) were relatively disadvantaged. When the principle of redistribution in force prior to 1989 was abandoned, a subjective sense of downward mobility and a worsening economic situation (relative deprivation) grew up among those groups which the communist system had favoured.
2. Many people who belonged to the Communist Party right up to the start of the transformation were convinced of the legitimacy of the former regime, or at least received certain benefits from their membership. The collapse of communism and of the rule of the Communist Party, the beginning of reform and the growing legitimacy of the market, democracy and meritocracy gave them a sense of vulnerability and of a worsening status and income.
3. Many of those who were members of the nomenclature of the former regime (managers and directors of large firms and organisations, high-ranking bureaucrats in political and state organisations, high-level experts also with many subordinates or party members

with such a number of subordinates) were forced to leave those positions of power and status they had reached by the end of 1989. For them, this represented a decline in social status (*social deprivation*), but the fact that many of them had acquired considerable social, cultural, political and economic capital meant that they were able to begin new and often successful careers. Thus they were able to avoid those factors leading to a sense of declining income (*economic deprivation*) [Matijù and Øeháková 1992, Matijù 1993a].

4. In a democracy, political behaviour is influenced by perceptions and evaluations of social reality. Relative deprivation, inequality, feelings about the justice of any inequality, of the social structure and of mobility within it, are powerful political weapons in any society. In western democracies, there is a strong tendency for people who have a sense of relative deprivation, of inequality or injustice, to move towards those parts of the political spectrum from where they can expect help in improving their situation. The Czech Republic³ today can be seen as being close to western-type political democracies. It has a right-wing government and it can be expected that those who have a sense of relative deprivation will move towards the left, while those who feel that their position has improved will orient themselves towards the right.

Research into subjective mobility in a single country may be deceptive. As the very term shows, it is a *relative* phenomenon and cannot be discussed in isolation, but only in a relative perspective. In the present case, the field for comparison was six post-communist countries which are undergoing similar processes. In order to draw fully valid conclusions as to the extent of the subjective rise, stagnation or decline, it would, of course, be desirable to compare them with countries which have not experienced a communist regime. This data, however, is unfortunately not available.

Data, Variables, Analysis

Data used in analyzing relative deprivation were taken from the international comparative study *Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989* (SSVE), which questioned approximately 5000 individuals between the ages of 20 and 70, in six post-communist countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia. As the move from being economically inactive to economically active is a factor both in objective mobility and relatively powerfully in the perception of improved status and financial situation, those individuals who were not economically active in 1988 were excluded.

Two groups of variables were studied. The first included those explained variables representing two types of subjective mobility: social (DIFSOC) and economic (DIFINC, CHANGE). In the case of the Czech Republic, a further independent variable representing political orientation (POLOR) was also considered. The second group was the explanatory, independent variables. The analysis revealed individual characteristics of the subjects which allowed us to identify those groups which had a sense of improvement, stagnation or relative deprivation. All variables are given in the appendix.

³) The only country for which we had data.

Results of the Analysis

1. Comparison by Country

The Czech Republic is undoubtedly in the best situation as far as the subjective perception of social status and the relative position of family income and personal financial situation are concerned. It had the highest percentage of “No change” or “Improvement” responses and the lowest percentage of “Deterioration” responses. This was most obvious in the change in personal financial situation.

Table 1. Evaluation of the change in social status, financial situation and relative position of family income between 1988 and 1993 (in %)

| | Social status (N = 19,565) | | Financial situation (N = 19,973) | | Family income (N = 19,829) | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|---------|
| | deterior. | improv. | deterior. | improv. | deterior. | improv. |
| Bulgaria | 64.4 | 8.8 | 71.6 | 6.9 | 59.7 | 8.2 |
| Czech Republic | 38.1 | 17.3 | 49.6 | 23.2 | 33.1 | 15.1 |
| Hungary | 59.7 | 9.5 | 65.3 | 10.6 | 44.9 | 6.4 |
| Poland | 49.0 | 16.2 | 66.3 | 14.9 | 51.9 | 12.4 |
| Russia | 52.7 | 8.4 | 67.3 | 11.3 | 57.8 | 9.2 |
| Slovakia | 50.6 | 12.4 | 62.9 | 16.1 | 42.0 | 10.3 |

Note: The difference from 100% represents the percentage of “No change” responses.

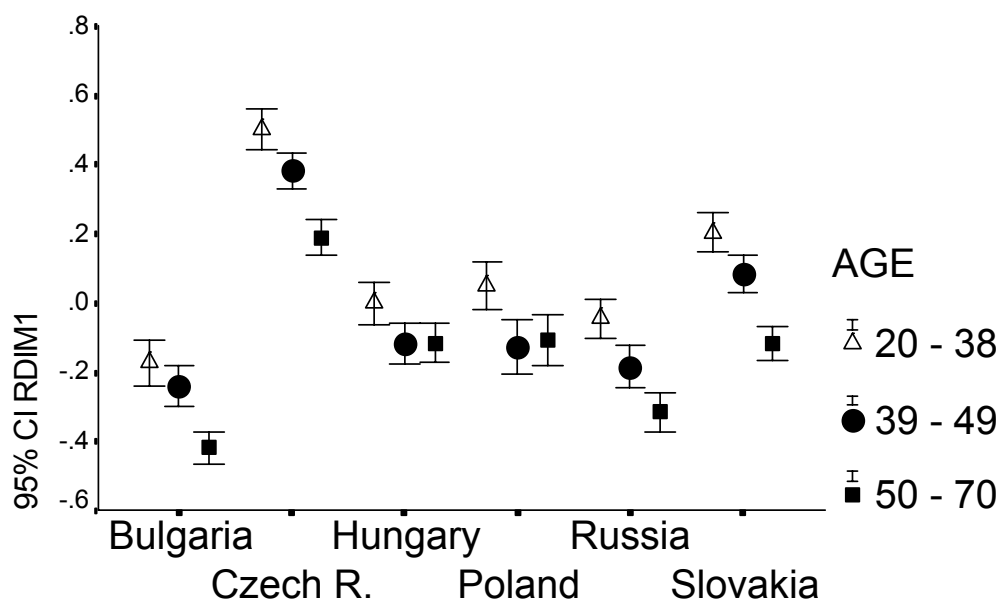
Source: Survey SSVE.

Russia and Bulgaria appear to be in the worst situation for all the indicators considered (see Table 1). The individual countries differ both in the global percentages and also in the results of the transformation for various social and demographic groups of the population. This can be seen from the variable DIM1 (see Figure 1-4), which can be described as the change in overall social position.

In the Czech Republic, Russia and Slovakia, there is a linear relationship between age and subjective evaluation of overall social position: the older the individual, the more often the change is considered a deterioration. In Hungary and Poland the link with age is less pronounced, although the youngest age category saw the change in its overall social position in a more positive light than did the others. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, only the oldest age group stands out, understandably with the most sceptical evaluation of the changes. The size of the gap between the Czech Republic and the other countries can be clearly seen from the fact that the perception of changes in personal social position among the oldest category in the Czech Republic is still more positive than that of the youngest age category in other countries, apart from Slovakia, where it was the same.

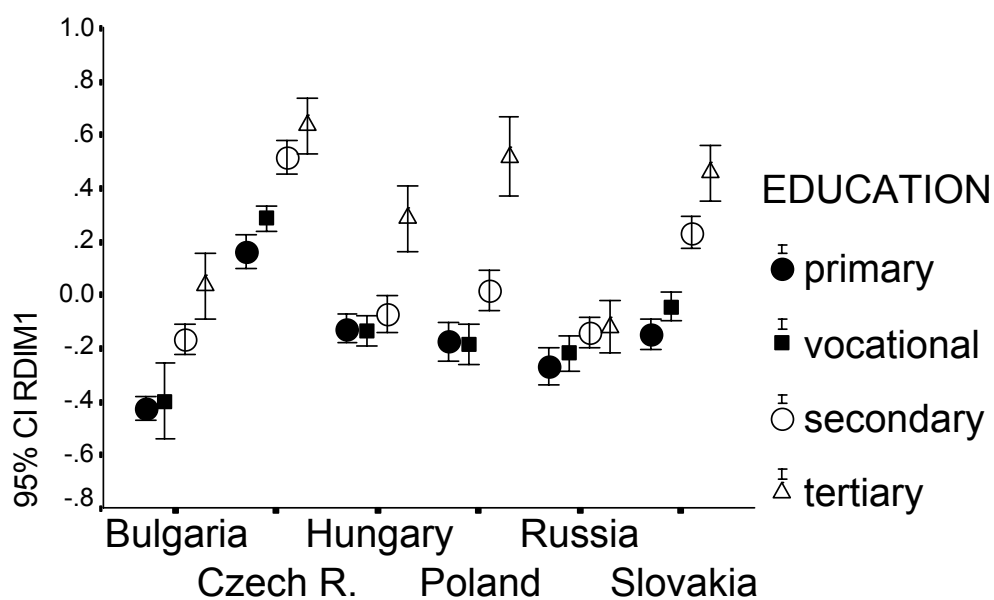
Russia is the only country where overall social position and education are not dependent. The situation varies somewhat in each of the other five countries, but it is possible to make a generalisation that those people who have not completed secondary school perceive the changes in their social position less positively than do those who have at least completed secondary school. The difference between the perceptions of people with tertiary education and those of others is greatest in Hungary and in Poland, where it reaches that of people with higher education in the Czech Republic.

Figure 1. Mean evaluation of the change in overall social position in individual age categories



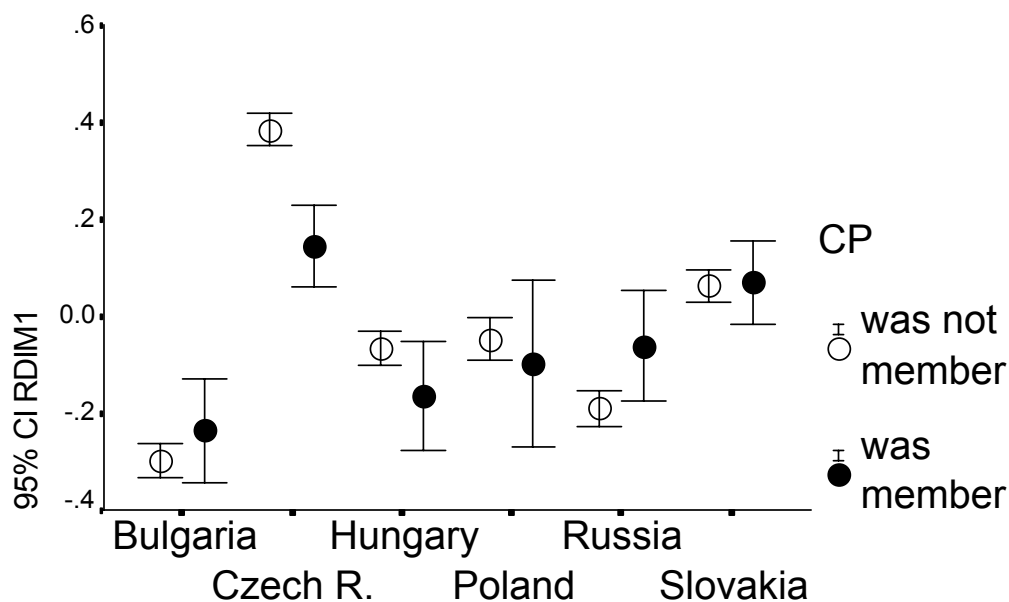
Source: Survey SSVE

Figure 2. Mean evaluation of the change in overall social position in individual educational categories



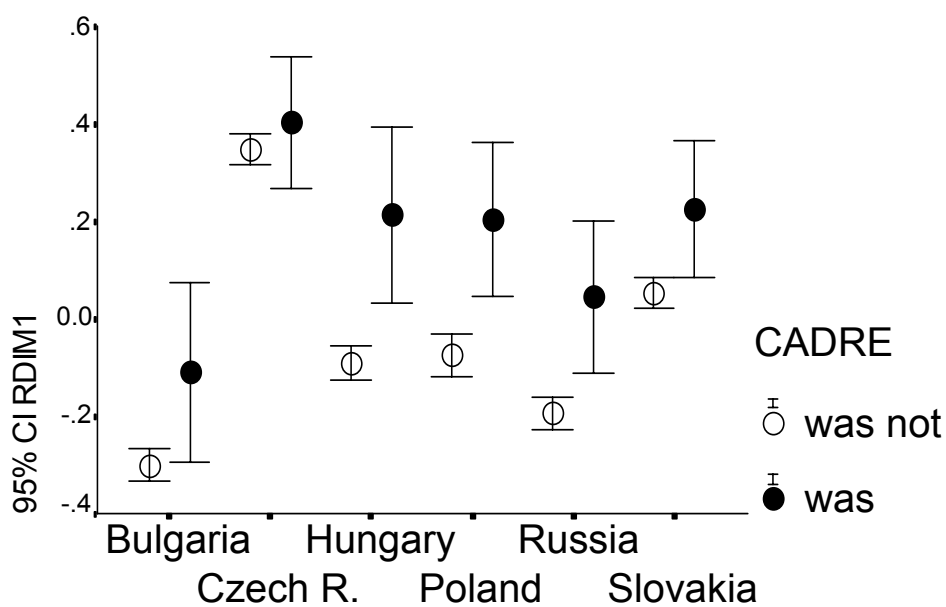
Source: Survey SSVE

Figure 3. Mean evaluation of change in overall social position for members and non-members of the Communist Party in 1988



Source: Survey SSVE

Figure 4. Mean evaluation of change in overall social position for nomenclature cadres and non-cadres in 1988



Source: Survey SSVE

The cross-country comparison is particularly interesting when the influence of membership of either the Communist Party or the nomenclature of high-ranking cadres in 1988 is considered. The Czech Republic is the only country where there is a significant difference in the way those who were or were not members of the Communist Party in 1988 assess the change in the social position, with the members' assessment being more negative (see Figure 3). When the former high-ranking cadres are considered, the situation is almost completely reversed: the Czech Republic and Bulgaria are the only countries in which there is no significant difference between the assessments of former cadres and of others (see Figure. 4).

Of the original variables of changes in social status, financial situation and relative position of family income, the difference between former cadres and others is very clear in how they assess changes in their personal financial situation. This is also true for the Czech Republic and for Bulgaria and supports the thesis of the transfer of these individuals' social, cultural and political capital into economic capital after 1989. In the Czech Republic and in Hungary, however, cadres gave a somewhat lower assessment of the change in their social status than did non-cadres. This indicates that in these two countries there were fewer members of the former nomenclature who were able to find an equal substitute for the positions they had been forced to leave.

2. The Czech Republic

While the comparative analysis showed the situation in the Czech Republic to be the most positive, it also revealed that one third of the population economically active in 1989 saw the changes in their status and the relative position of their family income as a deterioration, and half of them claimed that their personal financial situation had also deteriorated. These perceptions differed widely between different social and demographic groups.

1. The percentage of negative assessments rises with age, as does the percentage of positive assessments of changes in social status, personal financial situation and the relative position of family income.
2. Perception and assessment of changes is not influenced by gender.
3. With a certain degree of generalisation, it is possible to say that for all three changes considered, negative assessments fell and positive assessments rose with the level of education.
4. The direction of mobility does not have as marked an influence on the changes as do age and education. At one extreme, there are those who have set up in private business, whose assessments were most often favourable and least often negative, for all variables. At the other extreme there are those who have retired or lost their jobs. Between these two poles are those who experienced upward, downward or no mobility and it is difficult to rank these in any clear order.
5. Membership of the Communist Party in 1988 affects all three variables in the same way: members gave more unfavourable and fewer favourable assessments than non-members. This was most marked in the assessment of changes in social status.
6. For former members of the nomenclature, their former position affected their assessments in two ways. They gave more negative assessments of the change in their social status than did non-cadres, the same percentage of positive assessments and fewer of no change. They tended to see the relative position of their family income as having im-

proved, and less often felt that their personal financial situation had deteriorated than did others, more often seeing it as having improved.

7. In comparing averages from 1988 and 1993, it is clear that there has been a considerable fall in subjective status for manual workers, particularly those employed in agriculture. Professionals and the self-employed gave the same assessment of their status in both years, while routine manual workers felt a slight decline, which is not, however, statistically significant. The same situation applies to the relative position of family income. A decline in personal financial situation was most frequently found among agricultural labourers, followed by other skilled and unskilled manual workers. Professionals and private businessmen were the least likely to feel any decline.
8. The link between subjective mobility and political orientation was crystallised in the Czech Republic (Table 2). It is clear that right-wing orientation grows with a sense that one's situation has improved. At the same time a sense of stability or stagnation encourages an orientation to the political centre and a sense of relative deprivation towards the left. This was the case for all three dependent variables.

Table 2. Evaluation of the change in social status, financial situation and relative position of family income between 1988 and 1993 by political orientation (Czech Republic, in %)

| | Social status (N = 2,690) | | Financial situation (N = 2,749) | | Family income (N = 2,724) | |
|--------|------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|
| | deterior. | improv. | deterior. | improv. | deterior. | improv. |
| Left | 28.6 | 11.0 | 27.6 | 9.5 | 24.8 | 11.8 |
| Center | 50.0 | 49.0 | 51.4 | 51.8 | 52.2 | 48.9 |
| Right | 21.3 | 39.9 | 20.9 | 38.6 | 23.0 | 39.3 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Note: Percentages for "stagnation" are omitted in the table.

Source: Survey SSVE

If the problem is approached in a more complex way, taking into account the way individual factors (age, sex, education, direction of mobility between 1988 and 1993) operate in concert, it is possible to project a multiple logistic regression (see Table 3 at the end of the text). This makes it possible to assess the dependence of each factor on the subjective evaluation of changes in social status, financial situation and relative position of family income, with the remaining factors kept stable. (In this analysis we used the MLOGIT procedure from the STATA 3.1 program.)

All three variables considered showed the same risk factors, i.e. those factors which increase the risk of a sense of deterioration or stagnation (as compared to improvement). These are as follows.

- a) *Being male*: the relative risk of a sense of deterioration or stagnation is higher for men than for women. For status, the risk of feeling a decline is 1.4 and of stagnation 1.2 times higher, for personal financial situation 1.5 and 1.2 times, and for the relative position of family income 1.7 and 1.3 times. The Czech Republic presents an interesting situation. There women generally have a lower level of education and a lower income than men and represent an insignificant proportion of private entrepreneurs, and so, from an objective point of view, do not have those stratification characteristics that

mark the “winners”; however, they less often feel that there has been any deterioration or stagnation of their status and income. There may be at least two explanations for this. In Czech society, men generally have higher aspirations than women, this leading to the prevailing model of partnerships in which the man is the “senior partner” and the woman the “junior partner”. Men are therefore much more sensitive particularly to a decline in status or income, which are seen as overall status and family income, than are women. Professional structure also differs between the sexes: men tend to work as higher-level professionals or as skilled or unskilled manual workers, while women more often work in routine non-manual professions. From an objective standpoint, the period of transition does not favour the status and economic power of manual labour and this is felt by those involved in it.

- b) *Not having completed secondary school*: the current changes have undoubtedly meant a return of cultural stratification on the basis of education. Education now has a greater value in the labour market, and status and income rise with education (particularly in the private sector and in certain fields). Those with professional university degrees (economists, lawyers, private doctors) generally have the highest status and income and most often feel that their social and financial position has improved.
- c) *Not being a private entrepreneur*: the class of entrepreneurs did not exist before 1989, only emerging once the changes were under way. This is undoubtedly the group that has profited most from the transformation. Most people moving into this class have gained in both status and income, or at least the latter, and are fully aware of this fact. Other forms of mobility were not, however, linked with such subjective evaluation. Upward mobility is not one of the effective strategies for economic success [Matijù and Øeháková 1993, Matijù 1993a] and while in the Czech Republic it signifies a certain rise in status and income, it is no safeguard against a sense that these have declined. Stability, downward mobility and retirement are, however, social changes which are never positive when status and income are considered objectively, and individual perceptions bear this out. Retirement in particular is seen as a change which brings a greatly increased risk of relative deprivation in both status and income. (The relative risk of feeling a fall in status as opposed to an improvement is 12.3 times higher for retired people than for those active in business, while for both financial situation and relative position of family income the figure is 21.9.)
- d) *Having an income in the first to the fourth quintile*: as our analysis showed, only the highest incomes (in this case the top 20% of per capita income) have a significant influence on the perception of status, financial situation and the relative position of family income.
- e) *Being a member of the communist party in 1988* (this does not apply to the relative position of family income): the Communist Party was a mass party and many members did not draw any particular benefit from it. Although more a crutch than a reliable instrument for success, for a number of people it did mean a certain rise in political status. The reduced significance of the Communist Party and the consequent fall in the political status of its members could therefore have an effect on their perception of their social status in particular. (The risk of a fall in status is 2.3 times higher for members of the Communist Party than for non-members.)

- f) *Not having been a nomenclatura cadre* (this applies only to personal financial situation): Such cadres were high-ranking experts and possessed a wide-ranging capital. They were the incarnation of Djilas's "new class" [1957] or Szelényi's "class of redistributors" [Szelényi and Manchin 1987, Szelényi 1988]. In the Czech Republic, the lustration process forced many of them out of their positions of high status and power and the only effective strategy for preserving their income level was to convert their political capital to economic capital, i.e. to join the class of entrepreneurs. It is for this reason that they do not show any significant fall in status when compared with those who were not in a similar position prior to 1989 (the comparative risk of feeling a decline in status as opposed to an improvement is 1.0 for both former cadres and non-cadres). They do, however, show a rise in incomes (the risk of a decline in financial position is 0.5 and that of a fall in family income is 0.8, thus in both cases lower than for non-cadres). The economic transition has brought them much more than they would have gained had they retained their former positions and in some cases become upwardly mobile - as mentioned above, upward mobility was not the most effective strategy for economic success, unlike for private entrepreneurs.
- g) *Being older than 39 in 1993* (this applies only for the relative risk of an unchanged relative position of family income and social status). The most positive assessments of the change in status and income were offered by the youngest group (people aged between 20 and 38). Younger people tend to accommodate major social changes better, and if they have not yet established a firm social and economic position, such changes do not represent a threat but rather a promise.

The results of the two-dimensional analysis and multi-dimensional logistic regression brought out some differences. The influence of sex was revealed only by means of the latter method, while the significance of age lessened in multi-dimensional analysis. This is clearly linked with the simultaneous inclusion of direction of mobility and the category of "retirement". The strongest fact influencing risk was the direction of mobility, which is connected to overall income.

If the results of the analysis are compared with the initial hypotheses, it can be said that in all the countries considered, the risk of relative social and economic deprivation is highest for those who profited from socialistic redistribution and lowest for those for whom it was a disadvantage. In all countries, former cadres faced the lowest risk of relative economic deprivation. This is also clear in considering who were the "winners" and who the "losers", and their perception of the social situation. Only in the Czech Republic was there a significant difference in the way Communists and Non-Communists assessed their status and income. This implies that many former party members were not prepared for the political and economic changes, which were very sudden in the Czech Republic whereas in the other countries they had been under way for some years by 1989. Only in the Czech Republic and in Hungary did former cadres feel that their social status had declined. In the former, they were forced out of their positions by the lustration process and were unlikely to find full compensation in the private sector. A similar process took place in Hungary. The hypothesis of the link between subjective mobility and political orientation was formulated only for the Czech Republic and could not be tested for the other countries due to lack of data. It was shown to be correct in the case of the Czech Republic and there are reasons for assuming that it may apply to the other countries as well (e.g. in

the case of Poland, a number of people, including Sztompka [1992] and Wnuk-Lipiński [1994] are working on this.

Conclusions

Summarising the results of both the descriptive analysis and the logistic regression, it can be said that in the six countries examined, it is possible to isolate factors which contribute to a clear increase in the likelihood of a sense of advancement or of a risk of relative deprivation.

The first is the problem of the economic, social and political situation in the different countries. On the one hand, this can be seen as the initial conditions from which each country set out on the post-communist transformation. It must not be forgotten that in some countries the regime was clearly crumbling before 1989, both economically (in Hungary and Poland through the existence of a private sector) and in terms of its overall legitimacy. In a number of these countries, communist ideology and the redistribution transfers did not manage to eliminate real and widespread poverty, and the new regimes have not yet solved the problems posed by this legacy. Even before 1989, some countries showed sharp contrasts between rich and poor. In the former Czechoslovakia, the former regime had maintained economic stability right up to the end. It was also the most egalitarian country in the eastern block in terms of incomes and had a smaller percentage of the population designated as poor than in any of the other communist countries [Marklund 1993].

On the other hand, the internal situation in the individual countries must be considered alongside the political and economic steps which their governments have (or have not) taken, i.e. whether there has been a simple rejection of the past or whether they have tried to find solutions to present and future problems which will be important for rational citizens.

The analysis showed that the risk of feeling relatively deprived compared to the past is greatest in Russia, where the problem of relative economic deprivation is greatest, and in Bulgaria, where the problem of major deprivation is complicated by status and income. This is dependent on the economic situation in the country, both at the start of the transformation and at present, and on the social situation closely connected with this. If this is unfavourable, the evidence which we see as a reflex sense of relative deprivation may in fact be evidence of absolute deprivation.

The second series of factors which encourage relative deprivation are common to all the countries. Being male, being over the age of 38, not having completed secondary school, not being a private entrepreneur, particularly being retired or unemployed, having a low income, having been a member of the Communist Party in 1988 or not having been a high-ranking cadre at that time, are all social characteristics which greatly increase the sense of a fall in status and in both types of income. Having these characteristics often means not only subjective disillusionment in this time of transition (which cannot be measured among the convinced party members beyond retirement age, who built something only to see others destroy it and now have a low income so that they cannot buy the many products on offer on the market) but also a relative handicap in real life (the problems of a poorly educated person finding work, or of a person living on the threshold of poverty).

The analysis has shown that in the former communist countries, the influence of the transformation and the new and often worsening conditions of life often lead people to compare the past (before the change) and the present (since the change). These reflections, ideas and assessments can be expressed in terms of a relative deterioration, stagnation or stability (depending on how an individual feels it) or a relative improvement. These feelings are not purely random in any of the countries. In each of the societies in the course of transformation, certain relatively deprived groups can be clearly identified (less educated people, manual labourers, older people, those in lower income categories, those whose position has not changed, those who feel that their position has deteriorated, who have retired or who are unemployed). These overlap with the groups which are seen as the “losers” in the post-communist transformation. Just as it is possible to identify relatively deprived groups, it is also possible to delineate those groups which admit to a rise in income and social status (young people, those who have completed at least secondary school, people working in better-regarded non-manual professions, self-employed workers, those with high incomes). These can be seen to overlap with the “winners” in the transformation.

The fact that the deprived groups often correspond to those who drew a relative profit from the pre-transformation past, while those who feel that their position has improved correspond with those who are relatively profiting today, demonstrates the link between objective changes and changes in subjective perceptions and assessments in societies in transition. Many people see those new values which can contribute to success today, including individual responsibility, activity, competitiveness and continuing learning, not as increased opportunity but rather as a loss of certainty. This is more pronounced among older age groups.⁴

In the case of the Czech Republic, the transformation has not yet had as radical a social impact as politicians predicted and people expected. Few people have as yet had direct experience of unemployment and poverty. The right-wing government launched the transformation with rhetoric about “tightening our belts” and thus avoided stimulating uncontrolled euphoria. Unlike its radical liberal pronouncements, its incursions into the economy have been relatively careful from the social point of view and a range of social provisions have been retained. While many people’s economic position has worsened (with prices rising faster than incomes or pensions), the degree of deterioration has not been unbearable. It cannot, however, be excluded that people may start to think about how their position can be improved.

Subjective evaluation of mobility in post-communist countries has started to affect political behaviour. The flow of voters in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia away from right-wing parties towards the left is both a proof and a warning for the Czech Republic, since in economic terms those countries cannot afford a left-wing government. It is also a warn-

⁴) Retired people represent a distinct category. In any society there are groups among which the feeling that they are worse off than in the past is much stronger than for any other group. This is not only a problem of the Czech Republic and the other post-communist countries. In society today, a person’s position is fixed by his or her work, and stopping work is always seen as a life change which brings a decline in status and income in some degree. Retired people do not have strong economic and social support from within the family and are very dependent on income from the state. Inflation and economic stagnation affect this income much more markedly than does a positive economic situation. There is often a threat of real poverty.

ing that political democracy can block necessary economic reforms. Paradoxically, the legitimacy of the new regime increased after the election of left-wing parties in these countries, in comparison with the period in which it sought to legitimise the right-wing government. The connection between sense of relative deprivation or relative advancement with a certain type of voting behaviour in the Czech Republic shows that the risk of a similar development cannot be discounted. Analyses of voting behaviour show that the mean of subjective voting preferences is, at present, right of the centre of the political spectrum and there is still support for the new regime, which was legitimised by the right-wing government; there is, however, no certainty that this support will last forever.

In considering the effects of the perception of subjective mobility on political orientation, we come up against the contrast between, on the one hand, the idea which leaves its mark on the collective memory, and on the other, the experience which fades from it. The social equality of the past regime is clearly present in ideas about social structure in 1988 and 1993 [Matijů 1995, Vlachová and Ůeháková 1995]. However, the subjective experience that this equality was inefficient, non-functional and irresponsible is already fading from people's minds. With the appearance of democracy and the market, new rational and "functionalist" values are beginning to appear. Objective status has risen, as have the prestige and economic recognition of groups which enjoy high status, prestige and income in modern western societies, while for groups which were relatively privileged under communism, these have fallen. People have, however, become more sensitive to whether and what they have lost than to whether and what they have gained.

Appendix

Questions on subjective social and economic mobility:

In our society there are groups which tend to be towards the top and those that are towards the bottom. Here we have a scale that runs from top to bottom. Where would you have placed yourself on this scale in 1988?

Respondents were offered two scales – for the years 1988 and 1993 – with categories 1 = bottom to 5 = top. The variable DIFSOC was created from the differential between the values of subjective status in the years 1993 and 1988.

Compared with other families in general, would you say your family income in 1988 was far below average, below average, average, above average, or far above average? And what about now?

Respondents were offered two scales – for the years 1988 and 1993 – with categories 1 = far below average to 10 = far above average. The variable DIFINC was created from the differential between the values of relative position of family income in the years 1993 and 1988.

Since 1988, has your financial situation improved, stayed the same, or deteriorated?

Answers were coded into the variable CHANGE.

Explained variables:

DIFSOC – evaluation of the change of social status between the years 1988 and 1993, a variable with five values (1 = strong deterioration, i.e. decrease of three or more degrees, 2 = slight deterioration, i.e. decrease of one or two degrees, 3 = no change, 4 = slight improvement, i.e. increase of one or two degrees, 5 = strong improvement, i.e. increase of three or more degrees).

DIFINC – evaluation of the change of relative position of family income between the years 1988 and 1993, a variable with five values (1 = strong deterioration, i.e. decrease of two or more degrees, 2 = slight deterioration - decrease of one degree, 3 = no change, 4 = slight improvement, i.e. increase of one degree, 5 = strong improvement - increase of two or more degrees).

CHANGE – evaluation of the change of financial situation between 1988 a 1993, a variable with three values (1 = improvement, 2 = no change, 3 = deterioration).

Variables DIFS3, DIFI3 and RCHANGE (1 = deterioration, 2 = no change, 3 = improvement) were created from variables DIFSOC, DIFINC and CHANGE for the requirements of logistic regression. Variable DIM1 was constructed from variables DIFS3, DIFI3 and RCHANGE. In the first stage, variables DIFSOC, DIFINC, CHANGE were analysed by principal components analysis by alternating least squares (procedure PRINCALS in SPSS for Windows 6.1. This method was chosen because we worked with ordinal variables with a different number of categories), to find out, whether we can replace them with a lower number of variables appropriate to clear international comparison. The analysis showed that the mentioned variables could be replaced by one variable (DIM1) which explains 71% of total variability. We did not work with the second dimension which principal component analysis offered. Its eigenvalue was 0.17, this being lower than the recommended 0.33 for three variables. The mean of variable DIM1 is 0, variance is 1 and higher values are associated with the favourable evaluation of total social position derived from the evaluation of change of social status, the relative position of family income and financial situation. POLOR – political orientation (1 = left, 2 = center, 3 = right). This variable was created from an original ten value variable (1 = extreme left to 10 = extreme right) by merging of values 1-4, 5-7, 8-10.

Explanatory variables:

AGE3 – age (1 = 20-38, 2 = 39-49, 3 = 50-70 years of age), for the requirement of logistic regression was transformed into three dummy variables AGE31 (0 = 39-70, 1 = 20-38), AGE32 (0 = 20-38 and 50-70, 1 = 39-49), AGE33 (0 = 20-49, 1 = 50-70).

SSEX – sex, dummy variable (0 = woman, 1 = man).

REDUC4 – education (1 = basic, 2 = vocational, 3 = secondary, 4 = tertiary). For the requirement of logistic regression was transformed into four dummy variables EDU_PRM (0 = other education, 1 = basic), EDU_VOC (0 = other, 1 = vocational), EDU_SEC (0 = other, 1 = secondary), EDU_COL (0 = other, 1 = tertiary).

TYPMOB2 – type of mobility, (1 = mobility to the private sector, 2 = upward mobility, 3 = stability, 4 = downward mobility, 5 = retirement after 1989, 6 = unemployment after 1989). For the requirement of logistic regression was transformed into dummy variables MOB_PRV (0 = other mobility, 1 = mobility to the private sector), MOB_UPW (0 = other, 1 = upward mobility), MOB_STA (0 = other, 1 = no mobility), MOB_DWN (0 = other, 1 = downward mobility), MOB_RTR (0 = other, 1 = retirement after 1989), MOB_UNM (0 = other, 1 = unemployment after 1989).

QINCRMT – quintiles of total monthly income (1 = one fifth of lower incomes from all to 5 = one fifth of higher incomes from all). For the requirement of logistic regression was transformed into five dummy variables QINCRMT1 - QINCRMT5.

CADRE88 – nomenklatura cadre in 1988, dummy variable (0 = was not cadre, 1 = was cadre).

CPT88 – member of communist party in 1988 (0 = was not member, 1 = was member).

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Table 3. Relative risks for the Czech Republic

| | deterioration | | | stagnation | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | social status | financial situation | family income | social status | financial situation | family income |
| SSEX | 1.443*** | 1.479*** | 1.744*** | 1.245* | 1.237* | 1.303* |
| AGE32 | 1.268 | 1.170 | 1.310* | 1.377** | 1.046 | 1.284* |
| AGE33 | 1.313 | 1.130 | 1.262 | 1.510** | 1.161 | 1.512** |
| AGE31 (reference category) | | | | | | |
| EDU_PRM | 1.944** | 2.070*** | 2.077*** | 1.635* | 1.452 | 1.392 |
| EDU_VOC | 1.814*** | 1.955*** | 2.061*** | 1.610** | 1.323 | 1.560** |
| EDU_SEC | 1.243 | 1.258 | 1.537* | 1.151 | 0.990 | 1.307 |
| EDU_COL (reference category) | | | | | | |
| MOB_UPW | 2.043** | 3.161*** | 2.059** | 1.154 | 1.588* | 0.832 |
| MOB_DWN | 4.644*** | 4.862*** | 3.379*** | 2.072** | 2.233*** | 1.689* |
| MOB_STA | 3.596*** | 3.938*** | 3.027*** | 2.557*** | 2.565*** | 1.930*** |
| MOB_RTR | 12.343*** | 21.945*** | 9.280*** | 3.740*** | 4.686*** | 2.658*** |
| MOB_PRV (reference category) | | | | | | |
| QINCRMT1 | 2.282*** | 2.566*** | 2.268*** | 1.820** | 1.622** | 1.589* |
| QINCRMT2 | 1.945*** | 2.555*** | 2.660*** | 1.649** | 1.610** | 1.772** |
| QINCRMT3 | 2.159*** | 2.732*** | 2.088*** | 1.620*** | 1.628*** | 1.460** |
| QINCRMT4 | 1.691*** | 1.870*** | 1.847*** | 1.727*** | 1.562*** | 1.672*** |
| QUINCRMT5 (reference category) | | | | | | |
| CADRE88 | 1.041 | 0.555** | 0.837 | 0.832 | 0.678* | 0.878 |
| CPT88 | 2.330*** | 2.061*** | 1.343 | 1.443* | 1.541** | 0.982 |

Notes: *) $0.01 \leq \alpha < 0.05$
 **) $0.001 \leq \alpha < 0.01$
 ***) $\alpha < 0.001$

Likelihood ratio tests for the significance of the contribution of independent variables in the logistic regression for the Czech Republic

| | social status | | | | financial situation | | | | family income | | | |
|--------|----------------|----------|----|-------|---------------------|----------|----|-------|----------------|----------|----|-------|
| | log likelihood | χ^2 | df | sig. | log likelihood | χ^2 | df | sig. | log likelihood | χ^2 | df | sig. |
| modelS | -3439.649 | | | | -3540.751 | | | | -3411.972 | | | |
| modelA | -3444.861 | 10.42 | 2 | 0.005 | -3548.549 | 15.59 | 2 | 0.000 | -3423.598 | 23.25 | 2 | 0.000 |
| modelB | -3445.594 | 11.89 | 4 | 0.018 | -3542.655 | 3.81 | 4 | 0.433 | -3418.337 | 12.73 | 4 | 0.013 |
| modelC | -3499.604 | 19.91 | 6 | 0.003 | -3556.759 | 32.02 | 6 | 0.000 | -3421.873 | 19.80 | 6 | 0.003 |
| modelD | -3516.876 | 154.45 | 8 | 0.000 | -3657.290 | 233.08 | 8 | 0.000 | -3468.925 | 113.90 | 8 | 0.000 |
| modelE | -3459.944 | 40.59 | 8 | 0.000 | -3578.025 | 74.55 | 8 | 0.000 | -3432.946 | 41.95 | 8 | 0.000 |
| modelF | -3440.598 | 1.90 | 2 | 0.387 | -3545.410 | 9.32 | 2 | 0.010 | -3412.291 | 0.64 | 2 | 0.727 |
| modelG | -3455.614 | 31.93 | 2 | 0.000 | -3553.738 | 25.97 | 2 | 0.000 | -3415.703 | 7.46 | 2 | 0.024 |

Notes: modelS = full model
 modelA = modelS - SSEX
 modelB = modelS - AGE3
 modelC = modelS - REDUC4
 modelD = modelS - TYPMOB2
 modelE = modelS - QINCRMT
 modelF = modelS - CADRE88
 modelG = modelS - CPT88